1; Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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a gourd of sour milk always at hand in case visitors come. Part of the daily yield is kept for making cheese, and if there are several cows in lactation one may be reserved for this purpose. Milk for churning is drawn into a different gourd to that used for drinking milk. It is then transferred to a churning gourd (see Fig. 1), in which it stands for several hours, and as churning gourds are not cleaned, unless they smell bad, the acids which remain from the previous churning curdle the milk. After standing it is churned

FIG. 1. Churning gourd.

by a woman, or girl, who sits on the ground with her legs stretched in front of her, and, raising the gourd, brings it down with a jerk on her thighs where she rocks it a few times before repeating her actions: a simple but lengthy way of churning. A small quantity of water is poured into the gourd when the curds are beginning to form to make them set well and to increase the quantity of whey, and some ox's urine may be added to give them consistency. When they have formed, the woman pours the milk into a cup-shaped gourd and scoops them out with a mussel shell into another gourd vessel which is hung up in a hut. The whey, mixed with fresh milk, is mainly drunk by women and boys. Every day they add to the supply of curds and now and again stir some ox's urine with them to prevent them from going bad. They may add to the supply for several weeks before the final boiling over a quick fire, which

1: Evans-Pritchard E-S (1931, 1936) 1940
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turns the curds, *kieh in ker*, into solid deep yellow cheese, *kieh in car*. After boiling for a time the liquid is poured into a gourd and the oil on top is removed, to be used as a flavouring for porridge. The cheese is suspended in a net from the roof of a hut in a round gourd, a piece of the shell of which has been cut out so that cords run through it and it acts as a sliding lid (see Fig. 2), and, if air is excluded by a coating of cattle dung, it will keep in good condition for months. Milk may thus be stored in the form of cheese. It is eaten with porridge and is also used for anointing the body.

Sheep and goats are also milked in the mornings, but little importance is attached to their yield, which is drunk by small children and not used for dairy work. The woman milks and the kids and lambs finish what is left in the udders. As they run with their dams at pasture an evening milking is not taken; but during the day hungry herdboys often squeeze the udders and lick the milk off their hands.

Some points that arise from an account of milking and dairy-work deserve emphasis. (1) The present number and distribution of cattle do not permit the Nuer to lead an entirely pastoral life as they would like to do, and possibly did at one time. On a generous estimate the average daily yield to the byre is probably no more than twelve pints, or one and a half pints per person. A mixed economy is, therefore, necessary. (2) Furthermore the fluctuation in household resources, due to epidemics and transmission of bride-wealth, is further accentuated by the organic character of the staple diet, for cows only produce milk for a certain period after calving and the yield is not constant. It follows that a single family is not a self-sufficient unit, as far as milk is concerned, for it cannot always ensure an adequate supply. Therefore, since milk is considered essential, the economic unit must be larger than the simple family group. (3) Environmental conditions, as well as need for cereal food to supplement their milk diet, prevent Nuer from being entirely nomadic, but milk food enables them to lead a roving life for part of the year and gives them mobility and elusiveness, as their history shows and as has been recently demonstrated in the Government campaign against them. Milk requires neither storage nor transport, being daily renewed, but, on the other hand, involves a straight dependence on water and vegetation which not only permits, but compels, a wandering

the worse for their experience. Indeed, it may well be, as Nuer assert, that they are the better for it, for they lead a sluggish life. The blood is boiled by women till it is fairly consistent and can be used as a meat flavouring with porridge; or the men let it stand till it coagulates into a solid block, and, after roasting it in the embers of a fire, cut it up and eat it.

Nuer do not regard the blood of cows as a staple article of diet and it does not play an important part in their cuisine. Indeed, they say that they do not perform the operation to acquire food, though they confess that roasted blood is delicious, but for the benefit of the cows. Bleeding is designed to cure a cow of any unfitness by letting out the bad blood of the sickness. Also, Nuer say, it makes the cow fat, for next day it will be more lively and graze avidly. Bleeding, moreover, in their opinion, decreases the desire of a cow to be served. Nuer say that if a cow is served too frequently it may eventually become barren, whereas, if it is bled now and again, it will only require to be served once and will be in calf. Cattle are sometimes bled for medical reasons in the rainy season, when people may be so replete that the blood is given to the boys of the kraal and to the dogs. Sometimes they make incisions in the noses of calves and let the blood flow to the ground in order to make them fat. I have seen Nuer scarify their own legs and the small of their backs to induce fleetness and strength.

The following two points seem to us to be significant. (1) Whilst Nuer normally do not kill their stock for food, the end of every beast is, in fact, the pot, so that they obtain sufficient meat to satisfy their craving and have no pressing need to hunt wild animals, an activity in which they engage little. (2) Except when epidemics are rife the usual occasions of eating meat are ritual and it is the festal character of rites which gives them much of their significance in the life of the people.

V

Apart from milk, meat, and blood, cattle furnish Nuer with numerous household necessities, and when we consider how few are their possessions we can appreciate the importance of cattle as raw material. The bodies and bodily products of cattle have the following uses:

Their skins are used for beds, trays, for carrying fuel (Plate XVII), cord for tethering and other purposes, flails (Fig. 15), leather collars for oxen (Fig. 4), and for the tympana of drums. They are employed in the manufacture of pipes, spears, shields,

[p. 29 contains no textual material]

1: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1940
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commencement of the rains, in April and May, when the rivers begin to rise again and bring the fish into the shallows where they are easily speared among the reeds and weeds. There is very little fishing—by spear in occasional lagoons—after the Nuer have returned to their villages, for these are mainly inland, away from open water, and the streams are too deep and too infested with crocodiles to encourage fishing. Also, the fish are widely distributed by flood water and protected by rank marsh vegetation. Those Nuer whose villages are on the banks of large rivers sometimes fish from dug-out canoes (Plate IX) with long harpoons, but the Nuer possess very few good canoes —and these they have exchanged or stolen from the Anuak—for they have neither the wood nor the skill to make more than crudely burnt-out vessels of palm and sycamore.

Nuer are fine spearsmen but, otherwise, not very ingenious fishermen. Except for occasional fish spitted with amazing rapidity from the bows of canoes by harpoons and spears as they jump or rise to the surface, Nuer never see their prey, but either hurl their spears at random into likely spots amid weeds and reeds or set up grasses and withies to indicate the presence of fish. A myth recounts that once upon a time all fish were visible to the human eye but that God later made them invisible in the water. The chief Nuer weapon is the barbed spear, though the harpoon is considerably used. When fishing in shallows with spears they sometimes strike the water with a ball of twine or the shell of a giant snail attached to a stick (Fig. 10) to attract the fish. Fish are eaten roasted or boiled.

VI

Nuerland is also very rich in game, though Nuer do not exploit this source of food extensively. There are vast herds of tiang and cob; other antelopes are plentiful; and buffalo, elephant, and hippopotami abound. Nuer eat all animals except carnivora, monkeys, some of the smaller rodents, and zebra, and they kill the last for its skin and tail in the south of Lou country, where it roams in the dry season. Lions abound, especially to the west of the Nile, and are a serious menace to the herds, but Nuer only kill them and leopards, the skins of which are worn by chiefs, if they attack cattle in kraals or grazing grounds, as

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241 It may be doubted whether they could cultivate any crops other than those they now sow, without extensive irrigation in the dry season, and this is incompatible with their nomadism. These crops do not make an imposing list. The staple crop is millet (*Sorghum vulgare*), from which they reap two harvests, and they sow some maize near their huts and a few beans (*Vigna*), their only garden vegetable, among the millet. Besides these three food plants they cultivate a little tobacco under the eaves of their huts and plant some gourds to grow up kraal fences. The millet is consumed as porridge and beer; the maize is mainly roasted, though some is eaten as porridge; the beans are eaten stewed or cooked with porridge; the tobacco is used for smoking in pipes, as snuff, and for chewing; and the gourds are, according to their species, either eaten or fashioned into dairy vessels.

Millet, the main crop, is the only one of these plants to the cultivation of which we need make more than a passing reference. Once it is established it stands up well to conditions which would be fatal to most plants, and it is worthy of notice that wild species of sorghum flourish in this latitude. Maize is also hardy but, although it is important to Nuer because it is the first grain to be harvested when their supplies are running short or are exhausted, its quantity is negligible except on the banks of the Baro. Nuer distinguish between many types of millet, mainly by the colour of their seeds, and know which are early, and which late, varieties, in what order they ripen, which give good flour for porridge, and which have sweet stalks for chewing. The plant thrives in black clays which hold up water, but shows much adaptability and ripens also on the more sandy stretches on which the Nuer build their villages, though in such spots it has less resistance to drought and a second sowing is very uncertain. Eastern Jikany is probably the best millet country in Nuerland, and, although in many parts it is too flooded for a second crop, it is the only section I have seen which can generally be relied on to yield sufficient grain to support the population. Lak and Thiang tribal areas in the Zeraf Island, which I have not visited, are said to be good grain country.

Even millet will not flourish in standing water, so that the

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Every one helps in the work of the harvest, for the stalks must be cut down and the heads cut off and placed upon a rack which has been placed in the yard for that purpose. The grains of dura are pounded out, then it becomes the property of the housewife after the seed dura has been selected and stored for the coming year. 245 [422]

The stalks of dura are often kept for fuel or for making fences. [372]

If the rainy season has started early there may be a second crop of dura, but this seldom happens.

The wife must pound the dura and sift it to get the bran out. She pounds it in a hole in the ground which she has plastered with mud, using a long pole. She usually chants a song as she pounds, the thud of the pounding serving as a low accompaniment to her song. 252

The dura is cooked like mush and forms the main part of the food of a Nuer. He eats it without salt or sugar; sometimes he has a little milk on it. Or the dura may be soaked and then allowed to sour a little, and then cooked, in order to give the family a little variety in their meals.

Corn is also eaten, usually being parched. They also chew the dura stalk or the sugar-cane stalk (if they have it) for the sugar they find in them. 262

Some wild tubers are eaten, and some kinds of wild greens. Beans are also eaten, but I know of no Nuer who plants them in his own village. Men consider these wild greens effeminate and will not eat them except in times of famine. Sometimes in times of famine they gather certain wild grass seeds and cook them as a food. [268]

The Nuer is not inclined to plant any large field and thus be assured of a surplus of food. The Arab merchant comes to his village when the dura is threshed and shows such an array of beads and cloths that the Nuer is tempted 262 437

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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Chapter Three

FAMILY LIFE IN NUERLAND

THE HOUSE AND ITS FURNISHINGS

THE Nuer does not live to himself. He is a part of his particular village, and his actions affect all his relatives, no matter how distant the relationship may be. This fact checks him to some extent in his misdeeds, for any infringement of Nuer law not only affects him but all his people as well. He must give heed to them and to Nuer law in general if he is to count on their support and aid in time of need (Fig. 7).

The men and boys of the village usually sleep in the barn which is to be found in most villages. A house is set aside for the sleeping quarters of the girls. The women and little children sleep in the houses.

The Nuer house is conical in shape. It has mud walls up to about three feet or more from the ground, then the sloping grass roof. There are no windows. A door, woven like a mat, is made of grass. If the weather is cool, a fire is made inside the house and the smoke goes out through the roof. At night the door is tightly closed in order to keep wild animals out, so the ventilation is indeed poor.

A fence of cane-stalks is made and encloses a small yard. The door of this fence as well as the door of the house are made low so that one must stoop in order to get in.

The yard is swept clean—a branch of grass tightly tied together at one end suffices for a broom. One part of the enclosure is plastered with mud for a radius of two or three feet, and in the center is a hole, also plastered, in which the women may be found pounding the dura, making use of a long pole. The dura is pounded very fine, the coarser parts being sifted out by shaking it on a grass

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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252 tray. The durra can be pounded as fine as flour, but that involves much physical labour. The woman frequently chants a song as she pounds.

415 The household furnishings vary in number, but in most of the average homes the following articles which are considered necessary (Fig. 4) by the Nuer are to be found.

A large earthen vessel for carrying water.

An earthen cooking-pot.

A long-necked gourd having a small hole in the end of the neck. This is used as a milk-pail; milk may also be churned in it by taking hold of the neck and shaking the gourd vigorously to and fro.

Several half-gourds of various sizes which are used as dishes for food; the smaller ones may be used as drinking cups.

A number of mussel shells for use as spoons. Spoons are also made of the horn of the antelope.

A clay pipe with a long stem—this is much in evidence.

A large earthen container for durra (kaffir corn).

Network bags made out of grass rope. These are used to hold gourds of various sizes.

A large basket, woven in openwork pattern, to hold various possessions when travelling.

481 A spear and a fishing spear.

A big-headed club, and also smaller clubs.

519 A ring made of cane-leaves is used as a pillow by the women. The pillow for men is made out of a piece of a tree and has three legs. Part of a tree is chosen where the branches fork in the desired direction.

354 A baby basket woven of a certain pliable kind of wood, and also a grass mat to cover it with.

312 Skins of sheep are used as rugs to sit on, and the skin of the waterbuck makes an ideal bed.

359 A fire, with earthen shield to protect it from the wind,

14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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she goes. She steadies her jar with her hand as she goes down the river bank.

She rinses her jar with water, then fills it. She usually stops to wash her face and is then ready to return to her village. She calls one of the other women who are getting water, or if there are none there to help she calls some passer-by, who—even if it be a man—will usually stop to help her to lift the jar up and put it on her head. On the homeward trip she steadies the jar with one hand, as being full of water it is much heavier.

When she returns to her home the morning meal must be ready by nine or ten o'clock. So she pounds the dura in the hole already described, and sifts it until she has enough for the morning meal. Or perhaps she has a large stone, in which case she takes a small piece of smoothed wood resembling our rolling-pin and grinds the dura on the stone with it.

Then the fire is built with cane-stalks for fuel, and the earthen cooking-pot, partly filled with water, is put over the fire. It is supported by three little mounds of hard baked earth, and she keeps shoving the stalks of cane into the fire as fast as they burn away. The pounded dura is put into the water gradually, a little at a time, and stirred frequently with a cane-stalk having two small cross-pieces fastened at right angles at the end of it, made for that purpose. When the food is ready, the woman dishes up the man's portion in a large half-gourd which serves as a dish, puts the mussel-shell spoons in it, and calls the men to their breakfast. They go into the house and eat.

Then the women, if they are young or newly married, eat where they will not be seen by the men. If they have been married several years they may eat together.

The yard has to be swept, the children fed and cared for, more dura must be pounded for the evening meal.

[Cf. pp. 19-20, Coleoptera 116.—Analyst]

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 F322 Nuer F322

221 241 233 March - April. When the rains begin the old people return to the village for sowing.

June. The rest of the people follow with the cattle. The move from camp to village is direct, whereas in the move from village to camp there is an intervening period of wandering.

The Nuer year is therefore divided into two parts, consisting of a period in the villages and a period in the camp. This annual transhumance is necessary for the very existence of the Nuer. Rinderpest prevents complete dependence on cattle, so that they must have villages on highlands, with gardens, in order to grow the necessary supplies of grain. Climatic conditions prevent complete reliance on cultivation and the need of fresh pastures and water for the cattle forces them into dry-season camps near permanent supplies.

241 Homesteads may be strung out along sandy ridges with gardens at the back and grazing in front and the location and size of the villages depend on the distribution and extent of the higher ground suitable for cultivation. The direction of the dry-season movements are determined by ecological conditions. Transhumance enhances the importance of units larger than the villages which, for economic reasons, cannot easily maintain a self-sufficient isolation as do the Shilluk, Anuak, Atholi and Lango villages where the emphasis is on cultivation.

ECONOMY

The economic importance of cattle to the Nuer

234 242 Economically, cattle are chiefly important for milk and milk products, such as whey and liquid cheese. We are told that the Nuer value their cows according to the amount of milk they give.

Nuer eat meat boiled and roasted but, although they are particularly fond of it, they do not raise cattle for slaughter. It is considered that people ought not to kill cattle solely for food and, except on sacrificial and special occasions with a ritual aspect, the Nuer refrain from doing so. It is even thought that animals killed specifically for food might curse their owners.

Like other pastoral peoples in East Africa, the Nuer extract blood from the necks of their cattle and use it as a supplementary article of diet in dry season camps. The blood is boiled and taken with porridge as flavouring or is allowed to coagulate into a block which is roasted and then cut in slices.

237 With, meat and blood are the food products derived from cattle but the herds also furnish the materials for implements and other necessary articles. Skins are used for sleeping on, for trays, for carrying fuel, making cord for tethering, leather collars for oxen and in making pipes, spears and shields. Tail hairs are used for ornamentation, bones and horns are used for instruments, scrapers and hammers. Cattle dung is used for plastering walls and floors of huts; dried dung is used for fuel and